

Armthorpe Southfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106723
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	377450
Inspection dates	8–9 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Lynes
Headteacher	Sarah Cairns
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2009
School address	Tranmoor Lane Armthorpe Doncaster DN3 3BN
Telephone number	01302 831824
Fax number	01302 300626
Email address	head@southfield.doncaster.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed taught by eight staff, shorter visits to classrooms were made and observations of other activities took place. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders and staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documents including policies, action plans, information about pupils' learning and progress, attendance data and records of monitoring activities. Responses to questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and the 126 returned by parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether pupils' attainment is high enough at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, and whether the learning, progress and achievement of all groups of pupils across the school are at least satisfactory?
- Whether any areas of the school's work are outstanding, as the school judges to be the case?
- Whether recent challenges have been met such that the school is now improving securely?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although that of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has achieved Healthy School status and gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Information and Communication Technology Mark and the International award. There has been considerable staffing disruption since the last inspection. Several staff, including the headteacher and some other senior leaders, have had a period of absence, necessitating substantial use of supply teachers. All but one of the permanent teachers and leaders are now back in post, albeit in some cases very recently. There is some childcare provision on the same site that is not managed by the governing body of the school and it did not form part of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory. During the recent staffing situation pastoral strengths have been maintained, and the care, guidance and support provided are good, contributing to pupils' positive personal outcomes. However, there has been a negative impact on academic provision and outcomes, resulting in some dips in performance. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. With the headteacher's return and a more stable staffing resumed, the school is now better placed to begin to escalate the rate of progress. Senior leaders' comprehensive self-evaluation means they know the right actions to take to bring this about. Capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

The school places a strong emphasis on providing a warm, welcoming atmosphere and pupils say the school is like, 'one big, happy family'. Effective attention is given to meeting pupils' personal needs, including those who are vulnerable in any way. Pupils feel very well cared for and the extent to which they feel safe in school is outstanding. They enjoy good relationships with their teachers and peers. Their attendance is above average and behaviour is good. Good, effective strategies have been employed to engage parents, carers and other partners to meet pupils' needs.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Thereafter, they make satisfactory progress across the rest of the school. Standards of attainment are usually at least in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 2, although they dipped in 2011. The curriculum and the quality of teaching are satisfactory. Some teaching is good, but it is not consistently so across the school. Teachers try to make work interesting, and pupils respond well to this, but not all is engaging enough to engender a strong desire to learn. Teachers are aware of pupils' differing needs, but not all work matches them closely enough, especially for the more able. Pupils are not always able to apply the knowledge and understanding they have when working independently or in formal situations such as when undertaking tests.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are some stronger features. The headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has a determination to improve the school, and has created a strong sense of commitment and teamwork amongst staff. However, monitoring, while comprehensive, does not always draw on the full range of evidence about pupil outcomes and so some judgements have been on the generous side. Nevertheless, there is an informed understanding of where the school needs to improve and action is underway to tackle this.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of attainment and ensure that pupils make good rates of progress across the school by:
 - improving the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good
 - ensuring that work is well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, including the more able
 - enabling pupils to be able and confident to apply their knowledge and understanding when working independently and in formal situations
 - ensuring that activities fully engage pupils' interest and stimulate a strong desire to learn.

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation takes the full range of pupil outcomes into account when judging the effectiveness of provision.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are willing to learn and listen carefully to their teachers. Most try hard to do as they are asked. Not all are equally confident at volunteering answers in class discussion, although they are forthcoming when discussing issues with their 'talking partners'. They concentrate well when working independently, especially when they are clear about what to do, and they take a pride in their success. However, although they follow instructions and are keen to do well, their capacity to demonstrate independence and initiative in their learning is under-developed. The school has identified the fact that their positive learning in lessons is not always reflected in their performance in tests.

Children's attainment on entry to the school varies across individuals and from year-to-year, but is often below expectations for their age. Because of their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage the majority enter Year 1 with the knowledge and skills expected for their age. Attainment across the rest of the school is broadly average. There has been some fluctuation at the end of Key Stage 2 in recent years, with a rise to above average in 2010 having been followed by a dip to below the latest national figures in 2011. Staffing disruption for the group of pupils concerned contributed to the latter, but the position is now stable for the current cohort. Pupils are currently making satisfactory progress overall across the school. This is the case for different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Within this picture, there is some slight variability, with, for example, girls tending to perform better than boys earlier on in the school with the pattern reversing later on. Nevertheless, overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils enjoy school. They make a good contribution to it through their caring and responsible attitudes and behaviour. Older pupils, through their work as school councillors or play leaders, help ensure play times are happy occasions and that

pupils have a voice in the school. Their maturity is shown in them taking responsibility for caring for the chickens that pupils have raised from eggs. Even young pupils show spontaneous acts of kindness towards each other. Pupils' appreciation for what they have and their ability to reflect on this is shown in their contributions in assemblies. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel exceptionally safe, and they have a good understanding of how to assess risk and potential dangers outside the school environment. Pupils understand how to keep healthy through diet and exercise, and older pupils run a healthy tuck-shop. The large majority of pupils behave well. While there can be some minor restlessness in lessons on the part of a small minority, pupils respond quickly to teachers' reminders of their expectations. Pupils' attendance has risen to above average, and persistent absence has reduced.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers create pleasant and supportive environments for learning and they plan lessons conscientiously. Teachers often work to engage pupils by including a stimulus of interest to them, albeit with mixed levels of success. They generally take pupils' different needs into account when planning work, especially in English and mathematics. This is sometimes effective, but, on other occasions, what is planned is not delivered fully, or all pupils are given identical work. This particularly disadvantages higher-attaining pupils, as lower attainers are often supported well by teaching assistants. Good teaching is characterised by careful explanation of what constitutes success so pupils understand how to achieve it. Lessons are usually well-organised and appropriately paced, but occasionally organisational weaknesses such as too much teacher talk and unclear explanations limit learning. Efforts to promote pupils' independence and confidence as learners, including in formal situations, are starting to be implemented. Assessment and its use have improved since the last inspection, and pupils are more aware of their targets now and receive more detailed feedback through marking.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Due priority is given to promoting pupils' basic skills, with increasing attention given to their use across all subjects. The curriculum is well enriched, with a good range of visits, visitors and popular extra-curricular activities. There is effective attention paid to progressing pupils' personal development through the curriculum. The school has identified appropriate priorities for improving the curriculum further. These include further strategies to develop pupils' ability to apply their knowledge and skills when working independently or in formal situations and to increase their confidence, raise their aspirations and engender an even stronger desire to learn.

The school's good pastoral care and support is reflected in pupils' comments, such as, 'We all care for each other' and 'Teachers are always ready to help.' Pupils feel confident to turn to adults and each other with concerns or advice. Effective, extra support is provided for those with additional needs, with external specialists involved where necessary. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have 'child-friendly' education or behaviour plans. Children's induction into the school is good, and transition into Year 1 is in the process of being improved. Transition to secondary school is carefully managed. Strategies to promote attendance are effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

With senior leadership now largely stable again, there is a renewed sense of urgency about improving the school and raising standards of attainment. Clear priorities are identified and appropriate plans are starting to be implemented. Middle leaders make a sound contribution to leadership. Key governors are knowledgeable about the school and actively support and question it, although there is a recognition that there needs to be a greater focus on all outcomes when evaluating effectiveness. Some members of the governing body are new and so less involved in this. Link arrangements have been created to promote more liaison between governors and staff. Procedures to keep pupils safe are good and managed with vigilance. Equal opportunities are promoted and discrimination is not tolerated. There is regular tracking of pupils' progress including an analysis of how different groups are progressing. Strategies for narrowing gaps have been adopted, but are not yet comprehensive. Actions to promote community cohesion are underway, but these do not cover all areas. However, efforts to engage parents and carers are good, varied and effective, widened by the employment of a parent-support adviser. A broad range of successful partnerships with other organisations widen pupils' experiences and help to meet their needs.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a good start to children’s experience at the school. They are introduced to the provision thoughtfully and are encouraged to settle in quickly and successfully. A wide range of interesting activities are provided which engage children’s interest and secures their involvement. A good balance between those led by adults and those chosen independently, both indoors and outside, means that children can build on their interests and widen their knowledge and skills. Adults take every opportunity to talk with children, challenging and extending children to reach their potential. Assessments are used to track their progress and adjust provision to meet their needs. Because of the strong provision, children make good progress. The majority meet expectations for their age by the time they move to Year 1, and some exceed them. The staffing disruption caused a slight drop in attainment in 2011, but the situation is once again stable. Transition arrangements into Year 1 have recently been strengthened and are being carefully managed and monitored. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed, resulting in a safe and caring environment within which children thrive.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was an above average response rate from parents and carers to the questionnaires outlining their views of the school. The very large majority of these expressed positive views. Virtually all parents and carers think that the school keeps children safe and prepares them well for their futures. They say that their children are happy at school and they too are happy with their children’s experience. Some comments accompanying the questions reiterated and expanded on these points. Inspection evidence confirms the above views. A smaller number expressed some

concerns, several connected with the recent disruptions to staffing. The other main area that a very small minority of parents expressed some dissatisfaction with was the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence found that the school has appropriate procedures for promoting positive behaviour and for dealing with occasions when it is not, and works hard to support the very small number of children who have difficulty meeting the school's expectations.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Armthorpe Southfield Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 126 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 228 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	56	50	40	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	72	57	53	42	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	40	68	54	2	2	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	46	62	49	5	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	63	50	53	42	6	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	42	62	49	9	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	41	66	52	6	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	57	45	66	52	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	44	61	48	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	40	61	48	10	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	39	62	49	7	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	44	57	45	10	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	51	56	44	1	1	3	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Armthorpe Southfield Primary School, Doncaster, DN3 3BN

Thank you for being so very friendly when my colleagues and I inspected your school, and for showing us your work. We enjoyed meeting you and talking with you.

We judge your school to be satisfactory overall. It has lots of good features. Some of these are what you contribute to the school! You enjoy it, have good relationships with other children and are kind to each other. You even look after the chickens very responsibly. You behave well and attend regularly. You feel extremely safe in school and know that the adults care for you well. Teachers try to make work interesting for you and to help you to gain new knowledge and understanding. You try hard to do as your teachers ask. You reach standards that are broadly in line with those found nationally and you make sound progress in your learning. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start in school.

Some of your teachers and leaders have had to have some time off school recently, although those who remained worked hard to keep everything normal for you. Now that your headteacher and most other staff are back, they are working hard to improve the school for you. There are some things we have asked them to concentrate on to help them do this. We have asked them to help you reach higher standards and make better progress by making all teaching as good as the best and by making all activities really interesting. We would like them to make sure that work is at the right level of difficulty for you all, especially those of you who could do harder work. We want them to help you to be able to do as well in tests or when working by yourself as you are able to do in class when adults are supporting you. We have also asked them to use all available information when they are checking on how effective the school is.

You can help by continuing to work hard and behave well. I send you and your teachers very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan McKenna
Lead inspector

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